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KANT'S CRITICISM OF PURE REASON.

AN INTERPRETATION AND CRITICISM,

By SIMON S. LAURIE.

TRANSCENDENTAL DOCTRINE OF ELEMENTS.

FIRST PART.

TRANSCENDENTAL ÆSTHETIC.

[The object of transcendental æsthetic is to prove the possibility of *à priori* synthetic judgments in the region of sensible perception. That is to say, in the mere act of sensibly perceiving objects I affirm with respect to each a certain predicate which I do not obtain from the sensible object or presentat itself, and which is therefore synthetic or ampliative, and which also is necessary and therefore *à priori*. I say THEREFORE *à priori*, because, although Kant slips into the use of *à priori* as the contrary of *à posteriori*, the primary ground of his notion of *à priori* is the feeling (so to call it) of "Necessity" in a judgment. We must in estimating his argument, however, give him the credit of both conceptions as contained in the notion *à priori*—the conception of Necessity and the conception of "not *à posteriori*," that is to say, "not-given-in-Sense."

Kant's motive in this investigation (the word "motive" is used of course in an intellectual and not a moral signification) is to explain the necessary and synthetic character of mathematical judgments, which he assumes he has already shown to be *à priori* synthetic. I think he failed to do this, and consequently the motive disappears so far as I, the student, am concerned. The necessity or (apriority) has been explained as analytic, and it is of no importance to me that the predicates Space and Time should be found to be given not in sense but as *à priori* (that is, here, *native* and necessary) Forms of sensible Intuition or Perception.]

TRANSCENDENTAL DOCTRINE OF ELEMENTS.

1. *Transcendental Æsthetic.*

Knowledge is immediately related to objects through Perception (or Intuition), *Anschauung*.

But the object must be given or presented to us, and this it can be only by affecting our mind (*Gemüth*) in a certain way.

The capacity for so obtaining percepts (*Vorstellungen*) or presentats is called Sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*).

Through Sensibility therefore it is that percepts (*Anschauungen*) are delivered to us.

[Here *Anschauungen* seems to mean substantially the same as *Vorstellungen*.]

These *Anschauungen* are thought by the *Verstand*, which thus gives us *Begriffe* (Concepts or Notions). All *Begriffe* ultimately rest on *Anschauungen* (percepts).

The action or effect of the object on the Sensibility we call Sensation (*Empfindung*). The perception which reaches the Sensibility through Sensation is called empirical, and the object of this Sensation is called Phenomenon (*Erscheinung*).

[It is a pity thus to limit the “empirical” to outer sensible perception.]

The above passage, though introducing the Kritik of Sense in a free and almost easy-going way, is very important. The terms used demand close attention. *Anschauung* is for the most part more general in its use than *Vorstellung*; when applied to a particular object, however, these terms are each synonymous with perception and percept. But, again, *Vorstellung* has a more limited meaning when strictly used, inasmuch as it properly signifies only *Sensible* percept—actual or reproduced in memory. In truth, however, I PERCEIVE an operation of the understanding as well as a fact of Sense.]

The matter of the Phenomenon is that which corresponds to the Sensation: while by Form of the Phenomenon is meant that which reduces to order the manifold in the phenomenon. That which reduces the manifold of the Phenomenon in sensation to order, and gives it a certain form, cannot be itself again Sensation; and is therefore previously existent *à priori* in the mind as a Form.

Those percepts are pure in which there is no element of Sensation. The *Form* of sensible perception is to be found (as has been already said) in the mind *à priori* (we see this *before* we see the body, as Kant elsewhere says); and this Pure Form may also be denominated Pure Perception (*Anschauung*). E.g. take from a body all that the Understanding puts into it—Substance, Power, Divisibility—and also all

that is the product of Sensation—Impenetrability, Hardness, Color, &c.—something still remains, namely, Extension and Figure. These, then, belong to Pure Perception; they are the *à priori* product of the mind, and constitute the mere Form of Sensibility apart from any actual object of sensibility or Sensation.

[The above is the interpretation rather than even the substance of Kant; but it is true to the substance. It is only by putting the points in greater relief than they are put by Kant that we can see the importance, or at least the precise significance, of these passages and their relation to what follows. Note *first*: that Kant truly enough says, that that (power) which gives unity, definite relations, &c., to the multiform phenomenal, cannot be itself a second underlying sensation. But he makes an enormous stride when he says that *therefore* it is an *à priori* Form native to the intelligence. Criticism by starting with such an assumption starts in fact with Dogmatism. It is not a fundamental treatment of the subject. Note *secondly*: that, having occupied this position, it follows that the Form being *à priori* is pure. It is not *à posteriori*: it is given in and with Perception, and is Pure Perception. This conclusion we may, if we choose, accept, but it is not critically ascertained. Note *thirdly*: that it is further affirmed that Sensation or Sensibility does not give us the extension or figure of a phenomenal object, although it gives everything else vulgarly supposed to be given *à posteriori* (except, as we shall afterwards see, *Time*). Consequently, Extension or Space is a Pure Percept furnished by the mind itself as Form of the Sensible. We may readily admit that *if* not given *à posteriori*, it is given *à priori*, and is Pure and so forth: but *thus far* the *à priori* and pure character of this or any percept is a mere hypothesis. We yet look for the demonstration. (Kant is here for the moment using "*à priori*" in its proper signification.)]

The Science of the *à priori* Forms of Sensibility is TRANSCENDENTAL ÆSTHETIC, while that which deals with the principles (Forms) of Pure Thinking is *Transcendental Logic*.

Our first duty, then, is to isolate the Sensibility from the *Verstand* and its *Begriffe*; and then, secondly, to take away from the Sensibility everything given through Sensation, and leave nothing but pure *à priori* Perception, or Forms of Sensibility. We shall find that there are two such *à priori* Forms of Sensibility which give us *à priori* knowledge, viz.,

SPACE AND TIME.

First Section.

OF SPACE.

2. *Metaphysical Exposition of this Begriff.*

[The form *Begriff* is either used loosely here, or it signifies the perception or intuition of Space as held in and by the *Verstand* as a notion, applicable to the individual "many," as opposed to Space as an *à priori* Pure Perception or *Vorstellung*.]

By means of the outer sense objects are presented to us as outside us in Space: the inner sense perceives objects as in Time, under which Form the perception of our inner mental state is alone possible. We cannot see Space inside ourselves any more than we can see time outside.

What, now, are Space and Time? Do these predicates belong to the things *an sich*, or are they, as subjective Forms, applied to things in necessary obedience to the constitution of our mind? To ascertain this let us expound first the *Begriff* of Space.

(1.) Space is not a *Begriff* resting on outer (sensible) experiences. For my sensations cannot be related outside me, that is, to anything in another part of Space than that in which I am; and in like manner objects cannot be perceived as respectively outside one another in various parts of space, except on the presumption that the perception of Space already lies at the bottom of the whole procedure. The perception is therefore not due to the relations of the phenomenal as given in experience, but, on the contrary, outer and phenomenal experience is itself first of all possible through the Percept (*Vorstellung*).

[I cannot see the force of this argument. Suppose Space to be a condition of the existence of things *an sich* or *für sich* external to me; I open my eyes and perceive or feel, *first*, indefinite Space, and, *secondly*, things spaced and placed in indefinite Space—What can be answered to this? "You cannot," Kant would say, "perceive relations of Space without first having the intuition or percept of Space." True in a certain sense; but I get my sensation of indefinite Space from without in the first instance, and then gradually mark off spaced bodies one from another in Space, that is to say, I *place* them. Is not this a valid position to take up? Granted

that I cannot “*place*” bodies without a prior perception of Space, it does not follow that that percept must be a “Form” of my Sensibility. It may be given from without in Sensation after all.]

(2.) Space is a necessary *à priori* percept (*Vorstellung*), the ground of all outer perception: and this is shown by the fact that you cannot image (*eine Vorstellung machen*) the absence of Space, although all *objects* in Space may be extinguished. Phenomena are possible to Sensibility only under this condition of Space; but they do not yield Space to our cognition as a determination (of themselves).

[To say that I cannot *eine Vorstellung machen* of the non-existence of Space, is simply to say that I cannot imagine the outer save as spaced. This is true: but may I not say that it is true, because to think the outer is to think Space, for *all outer* is Space? “Outer” and “Space” are identical terms. The condition or Form of the externalized life of Deity is Space; and I in knowing this external, know Space as the universal condition.]

(3.) Space is not a discursive general notion or concept (*Begriff*) drawn from the relations of things, but a pure perception; for you perceive it only as one and uniform Space, and if you speak of “Spaces” you mean only parts of the same one continuous Space (*alleinigen Raumes*): and you think these “Spaces” not as constituent parts of universal Space and prior to it, but as *in it*. Space is essentially one, and the notion of “Spaces” rests on the perception of limitations of Space. From which it follows that an *à priori* perception lies at the root of all notions of Space. Thus it is that all fundamental mathematical theorems or propositions (as that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third) can be deduced out of an *à priori* perception with apodictic certainty, and could not be deduced out of *general notions* of a line and triangle.

[That is to say, Space is not an Abstract general resting on particular extended objects, for you can perceive it only as one, uniform, unique, universal Space, and not as made up of parts. On which I remark that, according to an important distinction, which I would suggest here, Space in so far as it is a *Begriff* is not an Abstract concept at all, but an abstract

Percept (universal), and that if Abstract Space *quâ* Space were not uniform, one, unique, it would not be a universal abstract percept at all. Is it not this oneness which is the essential characteristic of an abstract percept *as such*? Take even "hardness" as an Abstract, which is unquestionably based on empirical observation. In so far as it is a "general," it is one, unique, and not to be divided into constituent parts. It may be said that it is not, like Space, a universal condition of all presentation or representation of the outer, but, strictly speaking, only a general resting on a definite number of particular experiences. I might question this; but I content myself with merely here pointing out that, in so far as it is an abstract general, it is *one*. If Space is not only one, but also a *universal* one, this may merely mean that Space is a Form of universal external existence.

As to the mathematical propositions regarding which Kant exhibits so much anxiety that I believe they motivated his whole theory of Space and Time, I have already spoken of them. It is by no means apparent that where three lines enclose a space, even the largest side *must* be less than the other two taken together, until the case is presented to perception (as *Vorstellung*); in which event (unless we choose to go through proof on the basis of certain demonstrata and axioms as in Euclid) it can be shown that the two sides must be greater than the third, because, on close inspection, they traverse a greater space: or, again, that since a straight line is the shortest from A to B, and as two lines are not a straight line, their length on the way from A to B by the route C, or any other route, must be longer than that traversed by the straight line.]

(4.) Space is not a *Begriff*, because it is present to consciousness as an endless given quantity. A *Begriff* contains, or may contain, endless *Vorstellungen* *under* it, but as such it cannot contain endless *Vorstellungen* *in* it. Space, however, is *so* thought; therefore it is not a *Begriff*, but a Perception *à priori*.

[There is much force in this argument, but I think it only proves that the presentat Space is not a *Begriff* or concept. It is not built up out of a series of observations of a certain quality common to all sensible objects. But it is not on this account *therefore* a Perception *à priori*, so far as I can see. It is a Perception of what actually is outside, and in its first presentation to the Sensibility is one, uniform, indefinite, endless.]

3. *Transcendental Exposition of the Begriff of Space.*

[By "Transcendental" is meant the mode of *à priori* object-cognition.]

Transcendental exposition is the explanation of a Begriff as a Principle out of which the possibility of *à priori* cognition can be discovered.

[*Metaphysical* exposition, again, is the exhibition of the Begriff as given *à priori*.]

We have to show (1) that such *à priori* cognitions do flow out of the given Begriff; and (2) that the cognitions are possible only on the presupposition of a given explanation-mode of this Begriff.

Geometry has such *à priori* synthetic propositions of Space. Inasmuch as such propositions cannot be got out of a Begriff—they being synthetic or ampliative and not analytic—they must rest on a perception or intuition (*Anschauung*), and this perception must be *à priori* (prior to all actual perception of objects) pure and not empirical, because otherwise their necessity could not be explained, e.g. "Space can have only three dimensions."

[That mathematical propositions are necessary (and if the term "necessary" be identical with "*à priori*," *therefore à priori*) is certain. But the necessity, as we have already maintained, is analytical. We can draw a necessary conclusion analytically from Percepts as well as from Concepts, and this is a point of much significance. Therefore, even in geometrical propositions necessity does not carry with it *apriority*.]

How now can an external intuition (*Anschauung*) which precedes objects themselves, and determines the notion [*Begriff*] of them, exist in the mind (*dem Gemüthe bewohnen*)? Manifestly, this external intuition can so exist only in so far as it exists in the Subject as the formal Disposure (adaptation) of the same for being affected by objects, and through that affection acquiring immediate presentats (*Vorstellungen*) of these—that is to say, acquiring intuition (*Anschauung*). Accordingly, it can exist only as the *Form of the outer Sense* (*des äusseren Sinnes*).

Our explanation, accordingly, alone makes conceivable the possibility of Geometry as a synthetic *à priori* cognition.

[By the "Form of the outer Sense" Kant does not mean a moving force in Sensation itself which *so* and *not otherwise* interprets the outer, but a Form of the Sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*). Translate the word *Anschauung* above as Perception and not Intuition, and the argument may be reduced to this:

- (1) External Perception exists prior to the perception of actual objects.
- (2) It can *so* exist only as a disposure of the subject to receive affections from objects and so to get perceptions (actual).
- (3) It is therefore a Form of the outer Sense: i.e. of the Sensibility (of the subject) in its outer relations.

On all which I might remark, that, if Space be given as *External*, it could not reach the Subject at all there to be cognized unless there was an innate disposure or fitting capacity of the sensibility to receive it. This of course: and, THUS FAR, all will say there is a Form of Space resident in the Subject-Sensibility. But so to use the term "Form" would be an abuse; for, if it has any distinctive meaning at all, it means that the Subject does not receive the outer at all, but only a subjective interpretation (not even a translation) of it.]

4. Conclusions from the above Begriffe.

(a) Space is not a property of things in themselves or of their relations. It does not remain if the subjective condition (Form) of Perception is taken away. For neither absolute nor relative determinations of the outer object can be perceived prior to the existence of the things to which they belong.

[But these determinations are *so* perceived, Kant means, or, at least in their principle, perceived; consequently they do not belong to the outer object.]

(b) Space is nothing but the Form of all Phenomena of the outer Sense—the subjective condition of Sensibility under which alone outer perception is possible. Just as the capacity of the subject to be affected by objects must precede perception of the objects, so may we easily understand how the Form of all phenomena can be given in the mind *a priori*, prior to all actual perception; and how as a pure perception in which all objects are determined it can contain the principles of the relations of the same prior to all experience.

[This is important as showing beyond doubt that Kant distinguishes between the Disposure or constitutional adap-

tation of the Subject to receive affections of objects and the Form in which it envelopes these phenomena.]

Extension and extended things are, as such, true to man only. If we lay aside the subjective condition of external perception, the sensible percept (*Vorstellung*) *Space* has no meaning at all.

The permanent Form of our Receptivity (which we name Sensibility) is a necessary condition of *all* relations in which objects appear as outer. If it be abstracted from objects, it is a pure Perception bearing the name *Space*.

Space or Extension is not a condition of things (at least we have no ground for saying so), but only of things being known to us phenomenally [that is, in sense]. "All things are beside one another in Space" is a valid and universal proposition if taken with the limitation—"in so far as these things are objects of our sensible perception."

Observe, then, that the Reality of Space—that is to say, its objective validity—is affirmed with reference to all which can be present to us as external object [this is, of course, no reality at all, except that it is *really* in our consciousness]; but, at the same time, in relation to things in themselves as estimated by Reason and without regard to our Sensibility, Space is Ideal. In other words, Space has an empirical reality, but a transcendental ideality.

[In brief, it is affirmed that in so far as there is Extension, and by consequence all the relations dependent on Extension, such as dimension, figure, locality, that extension and those relations are imposed by the knowing mind on certain *Somewhats* in themselves quite unknown. To which, may I not fairly say, "if a particular stone or tree gets all its sense-properties from *me*, what is the stone or tree save a dependent on my Ego?" Again, how is it that this unknown, undetermined *somewhat* stirs into activity in me the Space-form of the Sensibility, which, though not dead, is yet still not alive until this external "somewhat" teaches it to live and to know its own powers? It is evident that, according to this doctrine, we are involved in greater difficulties than we can escape from by means of it. We are driven by it to posit an infinite number of external *points* of causation which by affecting us effect their own form and their own existence to us. Each of these points of causation is in itself different from every oth-

er, and by virtue of this difference affects our sensibility differently: so that, while stimulating into life the Space-form, it also at the same moment determines both the quantity and the quality of that Space relatively to itself the particular object!

The universe of things must reach a knowing subject somehow, and it does so by means of sense or feeling, which is broken up into various forms (viz. seeing, touching, &c.) If there is to be uniformity and certainty—anything which can be called *Knowledge*—in the knowing of the world, there can be but one general mode of sensibility; that is to say, Sense must be true to itself. The intelligence cannot say of an object at one moment “it is square,” and at another “it is round”; now it is “black” and also “white,” and so forth. Given a general mode of knowing the external, that mode must have subjective permanence, or subject and object would be involved in an insane whirl of perpetual contradictions. The necessity of this proposition, “An external object must be extended,” simply means that I cannot know an external object save through Sense. If, however, this mode is created in and with the subject-knowing, it is as true and necessary for hearing, smelling, &c., as it is for extension. For it merely comes to this, that at one moment the object stirs in me the sensation or mode of sensation which I call Extension, and at another the mode of sensation which I call Sound or Color. Both are equally valid objectively and subjectively, and so must be. To the extent to which they differ, they differ only in their respective universality, but not at all in their objective validity. They are equally invalid. Kant feels this difficulty as presented by the secondary qualities; and how does he deal with it?]

Besides Space there is no other subjective percept (*Vorstellung*) which can be called “*à priori* objective.” Color, Sound, Warmth, &c. &c., belong to the subjective constitution of the Sense-manner (*des Sinnes-art*) just as Space does. But they are in *sensation* (*Empfindung*) and are not perceptions (*Anschaungen*), and give us a cognition of no object in itself—at least, *à priori*. [Why?] Because from none of these *Vorstellungen* [of secondary qualities] can we deduce *à priori* synthetic propositions as we can from the perception, *Space*.

[Here again comes in the mathematical *motif* to which we have already referred as determining all Kant’s æsthetic doctrine.]

I point out this lest any one should be induced to illustrate by such examples [i.e. by means of the secondary qualities] the Ideality of Space, since colors, &c., are not to be regarded as part of the constitution of things, but merely as changes effected in our subject, which may be different in different people. The color of a Rose may be different to different people; but the Rose itself is to the *empirical understanding* always a thing in itself.

[This is particularly unsatisfactory. *First*, it is admitted that the so-called Secondary qualities are known through a subjective constitution of the Sense just as Space is, but that they have not even *empirical* validity, but are merely varying and uncertain affections of the Sense. To which the remark offers itself that the senses of Hearing and Color, &c., if normal, and Sound, though more easily disturbed by our own physical conditions than the sense of Space, are not more variable, speaking absolutely, than the sense of Space. There are diseases which utterly distort the sense of Space, just as there are diseases which distort the sense of Color or Smell. "Yes," it may be urged, "but the sense of Space itself is *always* there under every variety and distortion." To which the rejoinder is, "So also is the sense of Smell, &c., except when disease or mal-formation altogether extinguishes it." *Secondly*, it is admitted that Space as well as Color is dependent on a subjective constitution of Sense or Sensibility; but that the latter is a Sensation, the former a Perception, and hence the difference. Kant here, however, manifestly begs the question, or rather proceeds on the assumption that the *apriority* of Space as a perception has been proved: whereas we are entitled—nay, bound—so far as the origin of secondary qualities is concerned, to presume this very point to be still at issue; and to ask, in what respect does our knowledge of Space, in so far as it is dependent on a *process* in *sensation* (for that there is a process is not denied), differ from our knowledge of Color and Sound? They both may be on equal evidence (apart from the argument about necessary propositions) affirmed to stand on the same basis—the basis, viz., of a certain change effected in our nerves. That the one is purer and more direct than the other, does not alter the essential fact.]
